

# American Cancer Society

## Eat Right Challenge Toolkit

### Table of Contents

Eat Right Challenge	2 - 5
Quick Tips	6
Portion Size Guide	7
Recipes	8 - 9
Personal Testimonial: "I Did It!"	10
Additional Resources	11

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## Eat Right Challenge

How many meals do you eat at work? One? Two, plus a snack? Where do those meals and snacks come from? Do you bring your own or purchase something from the fast-food drive-through window? Or do you find yourself surfing the break room vending machines? And what happens if you have a meeting scheduled during the dinner hour – do you eat at the meeting or wait until you get home to have a healthier dinner?

Eating is a behavior that is influenced by the workplace. Unfortunately, food provided at the workplace or during business meetings is often high in fat, calories, sugar, and sodium.

To have a healthier life, Americans should eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and eat less red meat, high-fat dairy products, and foods high in sugar. Eating well and getting regular physical activity will not only help people feel better, but will also give them the energy they need to get through their busy days.

### Defining the Eat Right Challenge

It's a fact: You can help reduce your cancer risk by maintaining a healthy weight and committing to eating more healthily. This August, as summertime wanes and life gets busier, the American Cancer Society is encouraging Americans to stay well and reduce their cancer risk by adopting healthy eating habits to help maintain a healthy weight. A good first step: watch your portion sizes (especially of foods and drinks high in calories, fat, or sugar); it's one way to eat fewer calories and control your weight.

## Eat Right Challenge

### #1: Defining the Four Letter Word D-I-E-T

**What does the word “diet” mean to you?** The word “diet” was actually derived from the Greek word *diaita*, which means “way of life.” However, for many people, it means following a specific food plan for the purpose of losing weight. But once the weight is off, many people leave their diet on the sidelines and go back to their old eating habits. As a result, the weight often comes back and they are left discouraged.

But to live healthy, a diet should be a lifestyle, not a short-term cycle. That doesn’t mean your diet should be about completely banning pizza, chocolate, or potato chips from your food options. **What it *should* be about is eating a wide variety of nutrient-packed foods, balancing the healthy choices with the not-so-healthy choices, and coming up with a way of eating that you can stick to the rest of your life.**

**Make a commitment to do something great—for yourself! Visit [cancer.org/eatright](http://cancer.org/eatright).**

### #2: Eat well, stay well

Interested in reducing your risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and other conditions such as high blood pressure and stroke? Consider the following tips as you start managing your weight:

- Know your body mass index (BMI). This number is commonly used to judge whether you are at a healthy weight for your height, or whether extra weight may be putting you at risk for health problems, such as cancer.
- Being overweight or obese greatly increases the risk of dying from cancer, according to researchers from the American Cancer Society.

**Learn about the best ways to help reduce your risk of cancer through simple lifestyle changes at [cancer.org/eatright](http://cancer.org/eatright).**

### #3: 72 Million!

Dollars? Nope – this isn’t the jackpot for the next Mega Millions, Powerball, or Superball lottery drawing. So, don’t quit your job just yet. This is actually the number of Americans considered obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And contributing factors, such as “super-sized” portions, high-calorie diets, and lack of physical activity all play a role in the obesity epidemic. But the good news is you have some control over these factors. Consider the following:

**Bigger isn’t better.** The focus of eating should be on portion control – especially when eating foods high in fat and added sugars.

**Eat your fruits and veggies.** Replace high-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables. Aim to eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

**Make time for breakfast.** Studies show that people who eat breakfast tend to eat fewer calories throughout the day. Breakfast will also help you function more effectively during the workday and make you less irritable.

**Make smarter food choices.** Prepare whole-grain pasta in place of white flour pasta and try low-fat or fat-free dairy products.

**Drink water.** Did you know thirst is often mistaken for hunger? If you think you’re hungry, try drinking a glass of water before you go for a snack.

**Get moving!** Strive to be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day, five or more days each week. Exercise can help you keep your weight under control. Looking for time to exercise? Take a quick walk during your 15-minute break and/or lunch.

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#### **#4: Checks and Balances**

Do you update your checkbook every time you write a check or pay a bill – even if you pay online? Why do you do this? Chances are you do it because it helps hold you accountable for how much money you are spending every day. The balance helps you determine if there is enough money to pay other bills, shop for new shoes or a business suit, or go to a movie. If your checkbook balance is running low, there's a good chance you back off on spending until more money is added to your account.

If you are trying to eat better, be more active, or lose weight, consider keeping a food and exercise journal. You might even call it your “food and exercise checkbook.” It's there to help you balance your daily eating and activity choices.

To get started, write down what and how much you eat and drink throughout the day, along with how much exercise you get – and be specific (for example, six cookies; one cup of coffee with two tablespoons of sugar; 10 minutes of jogging). Seeing on paper exactly how much you eat or how little physical activity you get in one day can be an eye-opener. Just knowing that you have to document your activities in a food and exercise journal might help you stop eating after two or three cookies and start moving instead. As an added benefit, you might also consider writing down how you were feeling when you were eating (such as, I was hungry, stressed, or sad) and weren't exercising (e.g. sluggish). And do you eat more in social settings? It might be a good idea to keep track of whether you were with others or by yourself when you were eating.

Journaling will clue you in to the types and amounts of foods and drinks you consume and can help you recognize patterns that may be getting in the way of your success in making healthy changes. You will be able to see at a glance if you need to add more vegetables to your days, less sugar to your nights, and whether you need to rethink walking past the vending machine on your way to meetings.

**Visit [cancer.org/eatright](http://cancer.org/eatright) to learn more about the best ways to reduce your risk of cancer through simple lifestyle changes.**

## Quick Tips!

- About one-third of cancer deaths could be prevented by maintaining a healthy weight, getting regular physical activity, and adopting healthy eating habits.
- Factors that can affect obesity include type of food, preparation, portion sizes, fat content, food variety, and overall balance of the diet.
- Walking 10,000 steps a day is equal to walking about five miles. Getting to 10,000 steps requires a little more effort. Set a goal of 4,000 steps per day and work to gradually increase your steps every day until you reach 10,000.
- Seeing double? In 1960, one serving of a bagel was two to three ounces. In 2000, the size of a bagel increased to four to six ounces – twice the standard portion size.
- American Cancer Society nutrition guidelines recommend eating five or more servings of a variety of vegetables and fruits each day and choosing whole grains over processed (refined) grains.
- American Cancer Society nutrition guidelines recommend limiting consumption of red meat and processed meat, especially those high in fat.
- To help control your weight, choose foods low in fat, calories, and sugar, and avoid large portion sizes.

People of all ages can benefit from moderate physical activity on five or more days of the week. Moderate activity is anything that makes you breathe as hard as you do during a brisk walk.

**We challenge you to make a commitment to do something great for yourself! Visit [cancer.org/eatright](http://cancer.org/eatright) and join the American Cancer Society Eat Right Challenge.**

## Portion Size Guide

*As portion sizes have grown, so have American waistlines. Take control of how much you eat by using these visual tips to judge a healthy portion of food from now on!*

### What counts as a serving?

#### Fruits

- 1 medium apple, banana, orange – a tennis ball
- 1/2 cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit – half a baseball
- 1/2 cup of 100% fruit juice – small glass
- 1/4 cup dried fruit – small handful

#### Vegetables

- 1 cup of raw, leafy vegetables – 4 lettuce leaves
- 1/2 cup of other cooked or raw vegetables, chopped – half a baseball
- 1/2 cup of 100% vegetable juice – small glass

#### Grains

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 cup of cereal flakes or ready-to-eat cereal – your fist
- 1/2 cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta – half a baseball

#### Beans and nuts

- 1/2 cup of cooked dry beans – half a baseball
- 2 tablespoons of peanut butter – a ping pong ball
- 1/3 cup nuts – a small handful

#### Dairy foods and eggs

- 1 cup of milk or yogurt
- 1 1/2 ounces of natural cheese – pair of dice
- 1 egg

#### Meats

- 2 to 3 ounces of cooked, lean meat, poultry, or fish – a deck of cards

***\*\*Note that foods listed as “cooked” should be measured after cooking.***

**Meet with a virtual dietician and improve your eating habits at [cancer.org/eatright](https://cancer.org/eatright).**

## Recipes

### Crunchy “Oven-Fried” Chicken Nuggets

This recipe can be found in the *American Cancer Society Great American Eat-Right Cookbook*.

Kids and adults will love this healthful rendition of chicken nuggets. The coating adds a big crunch and keeps the meat tender and moist. Who knew nuggets could be so good ... and good for you!

Prep time: 15 minutes or less

Total time: 30 minutes or less

10 classic or whole-grain Melba toasts (2 pouches)

1 tablespoon canola oil

1 egg

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1/4 teaspoon dried oregano

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 2-inch “nuggets”

Line your baking sheet with aluminum foil or parchment paper to speed cleanup.

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Place a cooling rack on a rimmed baking sheet. In a food processor, pulse the Melba toasts until pieces are about 1/8 inch in size, with some smaller and larger pieces. Don’t overprocess. Add oil and pulse once or twice, or until crumbs are just moistened. (You can also use a rolling pin or a meat mallet to crush the toasts by hand in a zip-top bag. Then mix the oil and crumbs together in a bowl.)

Transfer crumbs to a plate.

In a bowl, beat egg. Add mustard, oregano, salt, and garlic powder and beat to combine. Dip chicken in egg mixture, then in crumbs, pressing to coat all sides of the meat. Place on the rack. Bake for 15 minutes, or until cooked through.

*Servings: 4 | Calories per serving: 230 | Grams of fat per serving: 8*



## Chicken and White Bean Soup

This recipe is from the new *The Great American Eat-Right Cookbook*.

A store-bought rotisserie chicken offers incredible versatility at mealtime. Here it makes a quick and flavorful “homemade” chicken soup. Instead of traditional noodles, this soup is made with protein-packed beans. Choose a rotisserie chicken with mild seasoning—both plain and lemon-pepper work well. Adding the wings and some bones to the broth adds richer flavor. For a burst of green, add a few handfuls of baby spinach or 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley right before serving. For classic chicken noodle soup, substitute ½ cup of egg noodles for the beans.

Prep time: 15 minutes or less

Total time: 1 hour or less

1 rotisserie chicken breast section or 3 cups chopped white chicken meat  
1 tablespoon canola oil  
3 carrots, sliced  
2 celery stalks, sliced  
1 onion, chopped  
2 cups water  
6 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth  
1 (15-ounce) can Great Northern beans, rinsed and drained  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Remove wings from chicken and reserve. Remove skin from breast and discard. Shred the meat from the breast and break off breastbones.

In a stockpot over medium heat, add oil. Sauté the carrots, celery, onion, chicken wings, and breastbones for 8 to 10 minutes, or until vegetables soften.

Add water and chicken broth and bring to a boil, stirring to combine. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes. Add beans and chicken meat and cook for 5 minutes. If too thick, add additional broth or water. Discard bones and wings before serving. Season with salt and pepper.

*Servings: 6 to 8 | Calories per serving: 235 | Grams of fat per serving: 5*

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## Personal Testimonials

*“I Did It!”*

There could be an advocate of the Eat Right Challenge within your organization! Many people have lost weight and lowered their body mass index by cutting back on portion sizes, adding more fruits and vegetables to their diet and cutting back on high-calorie, high-fat foods, and getting more exercise. Consider featuring these individuals in the company newsletter, via an email blast, on your company intranet, or on a sign posted on an easel outside the elevator encouraging employees to use the stairs.

Collect the following information:

- Name
- Height
- Weight (Before)
- Pounds lost
- Months at current weight
- Background history of weight
- What made the employee take action to lose weight?
- How does the employee maintain current weight?
- Highlight the person’s personal plan including:
  - ✓ Overview of daily meals and snacks
  - ✓ Daily physical activity
  - ✓ Most exciting moment since losing weight
  - ✓ Biggest temptation

## Additional Resources

*Healthy Living* is a free monthly e-newsletter that focuses on helping you stay well through exercise, eating better, maintaining a healthy weight, and knowing yourself and your health. By making smart choices every day, your employees can improve their health, help reduce their risk of certain diseases, including cancer, and increase the energy they need to get through their busy workday. Research has shown that individual lifestyle choices have an impact on our health, longevity, and day-to-day performance. *Healthy Living* is available in both English and Spanish. The newsletter can be distributed by email or in a printed format.

Sign up for the [\*Healthy Living\*](#) newsletter.